1: Meek E, G-5 (1925-1930) 1931
FF38 Katab FF38

"Ei, ee." *Obwai*: "Na mi kiang a zangat se zangat (indecent). Refrain: "Ei, ee."

The indecency of the songs sung at the public festivals is in striking contrast to the rules of decorum which govern the ordinary private life. This is not characteristic of the Katab, but may be said to be general of all Negro society. To brothers-in-law, for example, any jokes about sexual intercourse would, in the ordinary course, be taboo and wholly impossible. A man will bow down in humble subjection to his parents-in-law and avoid them on all possible occasions. But on the occasion of public festivals all the ordinary rules of private life are waived, and there is a saturnalia which permits a father-in-law to dance round in the same circle as his daughter-in-law, singing songs referring in the main to sexual matters. It is repugnant to any native to repeat in cold blood the words of these songs to a European, and it would be equally repugnant to him to use them at any other time than on the occasion of the public festival when, as of old among the Romans, free expression is given to the pent-up feelings. (In this connection we may instance cases where during public festivals, e.g. among the Gwari, it is permissible to abuse the Chief without fear of retaliation for all actions during the year which were regarded as unjust and tyrannical.) An *obwai* festival is also held at harvest, and a month before the feast his voice is heard warning the people to make preparations and desist from idle disputes.

There are among the Katab no elaborate rites of initiation into the cult of *obwai*. Children are taken to his hut at an early age (4–8), warned to be obedient to their parents and given food. The short ceremony is concluded by a form of baptism in a stream, the smearing of the boys' heads with mahogany oil, and a feast in the village. It may be of interest to mention here the part that the *obwai* plays among the neighbouring Jaba tribe in the matter of initiation. These initiation rites among the Jaba have no connection with circumcision. They are performed when the lad is between 9 and 11 years of age. Among the Jaba, the *obwai* is known as the *Ku*[1] and the initiation rites are known as *woroku*. A noteworthy feature is that the lad is initiated not by his father, but by his maternal uncle. The father has no say in the matter. The lad goes to his maternal uncle's house, and the uncle provides the preliminary fee of one chicken. He

[1] This is a Jukun and apparently also an Ancient Egyptian term. See Meek, *A Sudanese Kingdom*, p. 263.

2: Gunn E-4 (no date) 1956 FF38 Katab FF38

844 but subsequently spends three or four months " in her own home " (presumably her paternal compound? In societies where secondary marriage is common, a special connection with the mother, wherever she may reside, is usual, however).

According to Meek, co-wives of the father's mother attend the birth. The umbilical cord is severed with a razor, and was formerly planted with a seed yam which, when mature, was fed to the child: current practice is not stated. The placenta is casually buried " at the back of the house "; no beliefs are attached to it, according to Meek, but his diagram of a Katab compound shows that the *mother's* " *bean-garden* " *lies* at the back of her house. It was stated in 1921 that boys are circumcised at birth, but Meek does not mention circumcision.

553 Naming, usually a more or less casual matter, is performed two days after
304 birth. If the mother has lost a number of children, the *elenowum* (presumably of the father's lineage) may at this time preside over ceremonial beer-drinking with prayers. Every child's uvula is clipped on the naming day.

851 According to Meek, the first child is taken when two months old to the home of the wife's parents who, after an interval of a month, summon the husband and hold a feast. " Prayers are offered for the child's welfare by the wife's father or brother, who then delivers him back to the husband, saying, ' Take this child in full payment of the labour which you [when a suitor] expended on my farm.' The second child has to be redeemed, at the present day, by a money payment of seven shillings, which is regarded as compensation to the wife's parents for expenditure incurred on her . . . trousseau. If the payments were not made the wife's parents could retain the child. . . " Meek does not indicate how the time of this ceremonial fits in with the return of the wife to her parents' compound for a period of months, as already described.

853 During the period of lactation it is common practice for a mother to cover her
834 entire body and head with red ochre, to improve her supply of milk. Until the child is weaned, intercourse between mother and father is prohibited, this period
513 lasting up to three years. Boys sleep in their mother's hut till they are five years of age, girls until they marry.

597 Meek writes of " adoption " among the Katab, which might be described more accurately as " sharing " or " lending " children, " to a respected paternal relative who has fewer children . . . or requires an additional worker on his farm. Male children are not handed over to a maternal relative in this way; but . . . a man has to ransom his second child [of whichever sex] by a money payment to his wife's parents. Female children are, however, sometimes handed over to the mother's parents; but when such children marry, the mother's parents are not entitled to receive the bride-price."

Initiation

852 There appears to be no record of circumcision among Katab proper. Tribal
[304] initiation, according to Meek, takes the form of initiation into the public cult of *obwai*,[84] associated apparently with the private ancestral cult, but there are no elaborate initiation rites. Children, presumably boys only, of four to eight years are taken to the *obwai* hut, warned to be obedient to their parents and given food. The short ceremony ends with a form of baptism in a stream, the smearing of the boys' heads with mahogany oil, and a feast in the village. Though it is not made clear, this initiation no doubt occurs at the appearance of the *obwai*. It appears that no personal insignia are issued to the individual, at this time, at least (contrast Kaje, p. 112 below).

304 Boys receive their facial markings later, " some years after they have begun to engage in agricultural work." Girls receive their markings in connection with their primary marriage (see below), probably at much the same age as boys, since girls marry very young. Marking is apparently done individually and without particular rites or ceremonies.

[84] See below, p. 79.

According to
Temple, twins are considered lucky. An " unsound " child was drowned, at about the age of four years, " or sometimes later." Children are suckled two years, according to Tremearne, during which time the wife lives apart from her husband: during this period, in the case of the first-born of any union (see ***Marriage***, below), the mother resides in her parents' compound, according to Smith; and after its termination, towards the end of the dry season, she prepares beer for the annual *obwai* rites of her father's clan (see ***Burial*** and ***Religious Beliefs***, below).

Initiation

Boys are circumcised at about the age of eight years—whether or not ritually or in groups is not indicated. At about 10 years, apparently in groups, they are initiated into the *obwai* cult: according to Smith, each clan has its own *obwai* priest and shrine; whether any attempt is made to co-ordinate the initiation rites held by the different clans is not stated. Temple describes the initiation rites as follows (after Tremearne): " [The boys] are first shaved, greased and beaten, and are then taken to the sacred grove, but they may not yet drink with the men. They leave the grove and dance all night, and dancing and drinking goes on for another seven days, when they return to their houses, but they may not speak to a woman till another seven days have elapsed." During the course of their detention, the boys are told that *obwai* is a secret invention to discipline women, according to Smith. Revealing this secret to women was punished with death or banishment before Administration, and is still discouraged, though Smith states that " in 20th century conditions [*obwai*] does not command awe among initiated males, and has lost some former functions."

According to Temple: " The tribal marks are the same for both sexes and are inflicted at certain epochs in their lives—the boys have their foreheads scarified when they are able to hoe. A girl has her chest and back marked on reaching marriage-able age. . . ."

As already indicated, there is said to have been no special mark to identify a man who had taken a head, but, according to Tremearne, a man " was not supposed to have attained to the full dignity of manhood until he had killed someone " (see p. 96, above).

Marriage

Smith's analysis of Kagoro marriage is the most detailed available for peoples treated in this volume. An adaptation of his more complete account follows.

In general, marriage among Kagoro conforms very closely to Meek's description of the institution among Katab. Basically, marriage is virilocal, though a couple may share the husband's father's or husband's mother's brother's compound. Polygyny is permitted, that is, a man may support several wives in his compound simultaneously; a woman may have several husbands simultaneously, in fact, but her several husbands always maintain separate compounds in different villages, and there she " visits " them.[44] Marriage contracts may be classified as follows:

(1) Primary: bride is unmarried.[45]

(2) Secondary: bride has been previously married to any man other than (i) a fellow clansman or (ii) one in the ***niendi*** relationship.[46]

(*a*) By betrothal.

(*b*) By capture.

[44] Smith rejects the term *polyandry* as applying among Kagoro: however, *serial polyandry* seems to this investigator useful and meaningful in this situation, if it is made clear that divorce is not implicit in the term.

[45] *N.B.*, traditionally, no such thing as divorce existed among Kagoro.

[46] As regards marriage in general, relations between Kagoro clans (*kwai*) are classified as *niendi*, or as *nendwang*: a man takes his primary wife or wives from among the previously unmarried girls of clans that are traditionally in the *niendi* relationship with his own clan; he takes secondary wives from among the *wives* of men of clans in the *nendwang* relationship with his own clan and living in another village. (Close examination of Smith's report does not reveal whether women born into the same clan as his own primary wife, when married to men of clans *nendwang* with respect to the man's own clan, are excepted.)

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Kaje

LIFE CYCLE

844 *Birth*

According to Temple, a new-born child and its mother are bathed in cold water. On the fourth day, the child is taken outside its mother's hut for the first time, and is named in the presence of the women of the compound; by the father if a boy, the mother if a girl. Elders assemble for the naming of twins, which is delayed until seven days after birth, and is the occasion of a ritual feast.[115]

Initiation

852 794 It has already been indicated that *obwai* (*abwai*) obtains among Kaje: in general initiation into the cult follows the pattern of Katab proper, but Reynolds' exhaustive account of Kaje practices (of which only a brief summary can be given here) reveals details which may clarify certain obscurities in the Katab record.

According to Reynolds it is believed that Suryan (Baimbin tribal section) introduced the *dodo* (*abwai*) into the area, and it has spread to much of the tribe, essentially along the lines of lineage structure. Generally, each minor lineage has [346] a *dodo* hut,[116] but this is dependent on the size of the group and relations between lineages; some may share the same hut. The lineage which first obtained the *dodo* is recognized as the senior group in cult matters of the area, and its *gado abwai* (Magajin dodo) is recognized as senior and may or may not perform the functions of *gado kapiyi* or *atiyinhwasp*. Each *dodo* hut has its own *gado abwai*, [793] the post normally passing from father to brother or to eldest son, with three helpers, all with Hausa titles, selected by the *gado abwai*.

The *abwai* is regarded as an invisible spirit, identified by initiates with the [534] wind instrument which provides its "voice."[117] Other disembodied spirit-voices are also associated with the cult; *dodone* associated primarily not with initiation but with memorial rites for a deceased *gado abwai* will be described below.

Reynolds states that there are no special times for entering the cult, provided the "entrance fee"—said to be a number of fowls, a quantity of beer and a goat—is paid. Youths of the group who are old enough will normally enter at the same time, after harvest and before the first sowing. All who enter at the same time are of the same seniority and earlier entrants are, progressively, senior to them.

Initiation begins when the boys are assembled at night in the compound of the *gado abwai*, in a common sleeping hut, where they are told stories of the *abwai* to frighten them and its voice is heard outside. At dawn, when the voice of Riyam (the wife of *abwai*) is heard, they are taken by sponsors into the *dodo* hut. They are beaten, then *gado abwai* and older members gather in the hut; women and children remain outside at a safe distance.

The boys are shown the instrument which produces the voice of *abwai*, and are beaten to prompt them to reveal any knowledge of it which they may have and to betray their informant. At last they are grudgingly shown how to blow upon it and as each does so he is proclaimed a man. They are then shown a decapitated fowl, and are again beaten, and through skilful interrogation led to say that what they see is the body of a man and his severed head. The head of the fowl and some of its blood are placed in a calabash of beer, which is stirred with a knife. Then each youth, holding the knife in his right hand, takes the oath of secrecy. Finally he drinks the calabash of blood and beer. At the conclusion of the oath-taking Riyam "vomits" the initiated youths, and they are flung bodily out of the hut. They are then taken to the bush and, finally, bathe themselves

[115] Cf. Temple's account of Jaba ritual at birth, below, p. 118.

[116] From Reynolds' description it is round, not like the conventional dwelling hut, with a "piece of pottery covered with spikes" on the peak.

[117] It consists of a pod of *Oncoba spinosa*, with the seeds removed and two holes at either end. A white spider's web (or membranous white disc, under which the eggs are sealed for protection) is placed over one end and warmed until it is taut. Another "voice" is made from a piece of bamboo, 4–6 ins. long.

and return to the *gado's* compound, where their mothers anoint them with mahogany oil, and the boys join in a dance with their elders. Then they enter the *abwoi* hut as members for the first time, and sleep there for seven nights, when the *gado* may give them various tasks to perform. After this the younger members of the cult act as messengers for the elder members and must do most of the work in building a new hut when required.

Marriage

The types of marriage noted among Kagoro are found also among Kaje. Only the traditional procedure for engagement in certain cases appears to vary significantly. In past times a man could contract a special relationship with an unborn child by a kind of vow made to the child's father: he would declare that if a girl were born, he desired her as his (or a son's) wife,[118] and that if a boy were born he would treat him as a son. To-day arrangements for a girl's marriage will not begin until she is perhaps eight years of age. Small gifts are made by the suitor to the girl's parents and to the girl over a period of years. When the first marriage-payment is made (through collateral relatives related by marriage to both parties), the two parties begin to use the terms husband and wife, and the husband becomes subject to farm labour for his wife's parents: each must also now participate in the lineage rituals of the other; until final payments are made, however, the girl will not spend more than a few days at a time in her husband's compound. The final instalment is, in effect, the signal for the bride's " capture ": friends of the husband " abduct " her, hold her for three nights, and then release her to her husband, with whom she then takes up permanent residence.

Premarital relations between young people are, according to Reynolds, not so circumspect as those described by Meek among Katab, and a girl may be having intercourse with a number of lovers at the time of her marriage. Should a girl become pregnant before marriage, she will promptly take up residence with her husband, so that her child will not be born in her father's compound; her husband will thus become the legal father of her child, whatever the biological facts may be.

Secondary marriage proceeds much as among Kagoro. *Iddat*, introduced by Administration, seems only to have slowed down the whole process, thereby tending to reduce litigation over parentage. Marriage-payments are refunded only if no children have been born, and then only on application by the deserted husband, which suggests that in fact annulment only obtains among Kaje, and not divorce. Presumably, however, *iddat* must be submitted to by a woman who wishes to return to an earlier husband. To some extent the discipline of *iddat* may have had the effect of weakening the *abwoi* cult.

Reynolds states that a man anxious to hold a childless wife may, with her consent, provide a genitor, who cohabits with her in her husband's compound. Relationship between husband and genitor is not specified by Reynolds: choosing a genitor from another village or tribal section than the husband's might lead to an unwelcome secondary marriage; on the other hand, Reynolds elsewhere notes that intercourse between a man's wife and his brother, real or classificatory, requires ritual purification as a heinous offence.

Death and Burial

Death is believed to be a result of witchcraft,[119] offence against the supernatural, or of accident (which may be a variant of the second). In general, a person dying from a cause which is not apparent to Kaje is judged to be the victim of a witch who

[118] Cf. Jaba, p. 119, below.

[119] The *gado abwoi* is apparently the only individual able to inflict death by sorcery (magic) as opposed to witchcraft; but informants insist that no *gado abwoi* has resorted to sorcery since the advent of the British.

3:Temple G-4 (no date)1922 FF38 Katab FF38
Kagoma

575 "Each candidate on election is given a gourd, but as it was foreseen that indiscriminate blowing would soon familiarise the women with the 'Dodo's' voice, no one is permitted to blow the gourd without the Magajin Dodo's consent.

"Each village has its 'Dodo' head-man, known as the Magajin Dodo. He is the supreme domestic authority and no woman, not even his wife, is allowed to enter what is designated as his 'Dodo' room. The office is hereditary, and as a rule descends from father to son. The Magajin Dodo always wears a goat-skin slung across his back. He is naturally an object of much awe to the women folk, who endeavour to propitiate him with frequent gifts of 'gia,' so that the venerable gentleman is often to be encountered in a hopelessly drunken condition. 593 It is to him that husbands appeal when their wives turn 626 refractory, and a visit from the dreaded 'Dodo' invariably 575 produces the desired effect. When the Magaji visits a disobedient wife, he is always accompanied by one of his four subordinates, called Magadda in Kagoma. The visit is prearranged and the husband plays the part of a willing accomplice in the ensuing farce.

"The approaching visit of the 'Dodo' is announced to the husband by a messenger sent on in front for that purpose. The husband professes to be very frightened and advises his wives to fly and hide in the *nearest* refuge. (This is so that they shall not be far away when wanted.) On the arrival of the 'Dodo' the erring wife is sent for. Should she refuse to come, the 'Dodo' approaches her hiding-place, and addresses his warning; the uncouth sounds made on the gourd being solemnly translated to her by the subordinate who acts as interpreter throughout. A warning is generally sufficient, but should the wife transgress again the 'Dodo' will order her to be beaten.

"To further impress these simple and credulous women with his powers, the Magajin Dodo will sit outside his house and carry on a conversation with the 'Dodo' who is inside. This is done, of course, by hiding a man inside the house who makes the necessary sounds on the gourd."*

595 There is no limit to the number of wives that may be kept, 262 and the first takes precedence over the rest. They are not allowed to eat meat, or much salt, lest they should become fat and therefore unprolific.

846 On the day that a woman gives birth to a child both she 553 and it are bathed in cold water. Two days later the family-head, *i.e.*, the eldest male member of the family, names the child, [845] of whichever sex it be, except in the case of twins, who are named 852 two months after birth by the oldest man in the village. On

* Mr. H. F. Mathews.

3: Temple G-4 (no date)1922 FF38 Katab FF38
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Kagoro

the day that they begin to walk their father invites the whole village to a beer orgy. 852

The ceremonies that take place upon death are identical with those practised by the Jaba. A Kagoma widow, however, only mourns for one month and can marry again in the second. Under no circumstances can a woman inherit. 764 [587] [428]

They believe that a departed spirit can return to earth as a shooting star and re-enter upon a fresh sphere of human existence. 775

Sons inherit the whole property, but the younger brother of the deceased has the first choice of the widows. Failing sons, brothers inherit. 428

They believe in an all-powerful god. 776

KAGORO.

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The Kagoro have a population approaching some 8,500 in number and occupy an area of about 110 square miles in the Jemaa Division, on the northern and western faces of a ridge of mountains, known as Kagoro, which runs from Bauchi into Nassarawa. 131 161

Most of the towns are built at the foot of these hills, where the land is very fertile and large crops of corn, principally maiwa, which is almost exclusively used for drink, and beans are raised. The beans are the property of the women and are grown on trellises, like vines, and form the principal food of the people. Manure from fowls, and goat-dung and ashes are used. Cattle are not kept and there are no markets. 361 241 [273] [231]

In old days the Kagoro lived underground and went to their farms through underground tunnels, owing, they say, to the place being over-run with wild beasts. The villages are now surrounded with high cactus hedges, which grow to a height of from twelve to fifteen feet. In most cases each compound and each field is encircled by one of these. At the entrance the hedges overlap on the principle of a swivel-ring for keys. The walls of the huts are of mud and the roofs of thatch, which latter are renewed every year after the harvest. Each woman has her own house, which is accessible through one, or sometimes two, doors, two and a half to three feet in height. The entrance commonly leads into a low narrow verandah, but sometimes straight into a sort of hall which runs along the whole width of the house, and is used for storing pots, etc. A feature of the doorways is that each one is double and in between each is 173 361 342

3: Temple G-4 (no date)1922 FF38 Katab FF38
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When they are about ten years old boys are initiated in these mysteries. They are first shaved, greased and beaten, and are then taken to the sacred grove, but they may not yet drink with the men. They leave the grove and dance all night, and dancing and drinking goes on for another seven days, when they return to their houses, but they may not speak to a woman till another seven days have elapsed. 852

They do not marry until they are sixteen or eighteen years of age, their brides being three or four years younger. The procedure is for the suitor to give the girl's father from four to ten thousand cowries when he proposes. If he is accepted he adds one hoe, one goat, one dog and the flesh of another goat to the gift—an average example which varies according to the wealth of the contracting parties. Beer is prepared by his people, and taken on the wedding day to the bride's house, where drinking goes on for from one to ten days. On the first day the mother takes her daughter to the young man's house for a brief visit, and receives a complimentary present of 2,000 cowries or a hoe—later he comes to her house—and on the second day he takes his wife to his own house where she remains. There is intermarriage between certain tribes, *i.e.*, the Attakka, Moroa, Kaje and Katab, but a Kagoro man will prefer a maiden of his own or of the Attakka tribe, because the others refuse to clear grass for the farms. A virgin may only marry during the wet season, after the seed has been sown. At the end of the millet farming she puts on her married woman's costume and her husband celebrates the occasion by killing a dog and eating its head, liver, entrails and legs, while he gives the neck to those that helped him in courtship, and the remainder to his father-in-law. The blood of slaughtered beasts is always eaten, cooked with fat. If the wife is considered satisfactory her husband gives her mother another present. A girl has the right of refusal and can obtain a divorce, subject to her father's consent, for he retains the legal power to persuade her to go back to her husband, to leave him, or to marry her to someone else. He also has the right of possession over her children, unless her husband redeems them by payment of three goats each. This practice has been put down by the British Government. 582 585 [591] [252] [586]

Children are suckled for two or three years. Boys are named by their father and are circumcised, a very old custom. If a child proves unsound before it is about four years old, or sometimes later, it is thought to be a snake and may be thrown into water. Twins are considered very lucky. 862 304 553 845 847

A man's first wife has authority over subsequent wives and may even beat them, a right so fully recognised that, if these latter forget themselves so far as to retaliate, their parents give her beer. The women all eat together, helping themselves with their right hands, for men alone are allowed the use of spoons. 595 [264]

3:Temple G-4 (no date)1922 FF38 Katab FF38

[p. 222]

KATAB.

101 161 The Katab are situated in the Kauru District in the south-west of Zaria Emirate, where they occupy an area of some 200 square miles with a population of 5,000; they have also one township over the border in Nassarawa Province.

101 619 304 They are probably indigenous to their district. They show a certain affinity to the Kagoro and kindred tribes, who have adopted the Katab tribal marks, invented only two generations ago by a skilful operator, which consist of numerous short perpendicular cuts along the forehead from ear to ear and thirteen or more long slanting lines on each cheek from ear to chin. The incisions are painted with soot.

197 Their language, too, resembles that of the Kagoro, Kaje, Attakka and Moroa, and their customs are similar.

291 301 302 304 The women wear a bunch of leaves in front, and a conical shaped piece of bamboo, covered with string and decorated with beads and brass behind. They place wooden plugs in their upper and lower lips and shave their heads.

241 694 852 The Katab are good agriculturalists and breed a considerable quantity of live-stock. They are great highwaymen, and the first drop of water that an infant drinks is stolen, that he may be thus early initiated in the craft.

771 823 They are a pagan people, with belief in sorcery. There is a rock named Dutsin Kerrima in Nassarawa Province, which they declare becomes luminous every Sunday and Friday night, when white cattle are seen on the summit, herded by a white Filane girl.

727 273 They are head hunters and drink heavily.